

BULLETIN  
of  
THE EVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

( FOUNDED 1976 )

Local  
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issue 1

Volume II, Issue 1, April 1978

JUN 8 - 1978

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## MEETINGS

First Wednesday in January,  
April, June and November  
Room "C" City Hall  
Everett, Massachusetts

THE EVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOHN J. MULLEN

MAYOR OF EVERETT

1917

by

Julia Rich Hogan

When John J. Mullen was elected Mayor of Everett in 1916, to serve a one-year term, he was thirty-seven years of age. Everett was never quite the same after his term ended. He was a small man, with flashing eyes, a black walrus-type mustache, and a blustering manner. He was the most picturesque public official ever to hold office here. More than fifty years have passed since his administration, yet it is still difficult to determine whether he was a "loud mouth", a demagogue, or a man of vision with ideas too advanced for his time. It is for the reader to judge.

Mullen came to the mayor's office from our Board of Aldermen. He had sometime previously been in public office in Charlestown, where his voice was raised loudly on issues, the foremost being his efforts to bar the Boston Elevated Railroad (M. B. T. A.) from constructing an overhead railway on Main St. Charlestown. His contention was that Main Street was the street of the "Professionals" and a more logical route would be along Rutherford Avenue past the prison. He said, "Let it keep the prisoners awake and not the professionals." His entrance into Everett politics came at a time when the control of politics was in the hands of WASPs. He was the Boston-born son of an Irish immigrant.

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In 1915, as an Alderman, Mullen charged the Board of Public Works with making payments for work not performed, and the Board's records and personnel were summoned to a public hearing. At the hearing, when the charges were read, the audience, consisting of 250 citizens with two "burly" patrolmen to keep them in check, became unruly. The police attempted to clear the hall but were unable to do so. The Board was represented by attorney H. H. Newton, who asked for proof of the charges by Mullen, who seemed unable to produce the evidence. Apologies were asked of him by all accused, but he refused. At one point he charged Alderman Hansen with trying to make the chamber like the Old Howard, whereupon Hansen folded his papers and left the hall. After this meeting, the Everett newspapers referred to Mullen as the "Big Noise". He was called "Smush Mullen" in other quarters. The citizens who attended the meeting were called "Bench Warmers" by the same newspapers.

On February 25 the uproar at the Aldermen's meeting was so great the Common Council could not conduct its meeting. The matter before the Board was payment of bills by the city before the aldermen were informed what the bills covered. Mullen rose for a point of personal privilege many times, until it was suggested this privilege be withdrawn. He then verbally attacked Mayor James Chambers (1912-16): "The Mayor may investigate... but he isn't running this city. He's only one man. I'm as responsible for the city's money as he is. If I hadn't put a muzzle on him the tax rate would have been \$30 instead of what it is..."

On the following Wednesday, Councilman John Cahill's order for a commission to be appointed to build an addition to the high school (now the vocational school) was discussed, and Mullen directed remarks

to Chairman Clinton Hobbs: "You're worse than the other king who was here: you're a kaiser - a czar. Mayor Chambers is not competent to appoint a commission." Alderman Fred C. Hansen commented sarcastically, "There is only one competent man here and that is Mullen." "I'm superior to you" retorted Mullen, who added, "The present high school building is a joke and the new Parlin school, built down in a bog, looks more like a garage than a schoolhouse... I'm opposed to adding any more lumps to the high school. It's a disgrace to Everett..." Mullen then entered eight orders, one to investigate telephone charges of the city council, and another to determine who owned the high school grounds.

The people were now fully aroused by the charges brought by Mullen and the meeting on March 3 was conducted before an overflow crowd, necessitating the removal of the meeting to the council chamber, and even then citizens lined the walls of the corridor, screeching for the Aldermen to speak louder. Mullen had the floor again, charging the Board of Aldermen with "conspiracy to rob the city treasury in that men should not be allowed to work for the water and fire departments at the same time." Mullen then asked for a glass of water. City Messenger Frank J. Pettingill brought it, and Mullen shouted, "Take it away, you may have put a knockout drop in it." Mullen then began a filibuster, stating, "The Board of Public Works will go to jail, and you, Mr. Chairman, will go along with the rest of the bunch." He further disrupted the meeting by writing his own name on ballots submitted by Mayor Chambers covering various appointments, which ballots had to be carried over to the next meeting.

On the following Tuesday Chairman Hobbs announced the suspension of Mullen from the Board, and ordered the City Messenger to invest himself

with the insignia of Mullen's office and remove him from the meeting. Pettingill asked Mullen to accompany him out and Mullen refused "by advice of counsel." Patrolmen Patrick Murphy, James Donovan and Flynn asked Mullen to leave, but he refused, whereupon the three patrolmen forcibly removed him. He was hustled into the police car and at headquarters gave cash bail of fifty dollars. He was arraigned at police court on two counts: disturbing the peace and interrupting a meeting of the Board of Aldermen. He pleaded not guilty. The case was heard in Malden Court on March 17, with Judge Bruce presiding and Judge (Col.) Sweetser representing the Board of Aldermen. Mullen was acquitted on both charges.

The mayoral campaign of the fall of 1916 produced three candidates: Clinton E. Hobbs, Chairman of the Board of Aldermen, who lived at 3 Harris Ave. and whose campaign secretary was W. P. Lombard; Frank B. Rich, who lived at 349 Broadway and whose campaign chairman was Joseph I. Larson (later a Massachusetts legislator); and John J. Mullen. The charges passed between Mullen and Hobbs were most vitriolic, Hobbs charging Mullen with various misdeeds, and Mullen charging everyone in public office with misdeeds, especially the Board of Aldermen. The thinking of Mullen's opposition was that in a three-way fight Mullen would win, and they sought to have both Hobbs and Rich withdraw and get a single candidate, possibly General Sweetser, or former Mayor Charles Bruce (1901-2 and 1908-10). The plan did not materialize as General Sweetser was at the Texas Border with Company B of the National Guard, and Bruce declined.

There were several items of interest on the ballot. One was to make New Year's Day a legal holiday. Another was to prevent voters of one political party from voting in the primaries of another political party. An effort was made to get persons of high

esteem to run for the Common Council, since several of the councilmen had been threatened with arrest for non-payment of poll taxes. Names suggested were Thomas J. Boynton (Mayor, 1904 and 1906-7) and James Chambers, both of whom agreed to run.

Election day was designated as December 12, 1916. For ten days before there was extensive campaigning. Frank B. Rich held rallies at Conservatory Hall on School Street, McCormack's store at 80 Hancock Street (the corner of Dean Street), Cutliff's Blacksmith Shop in Ward 1, at a blacksmith's shop at 736 Broadway near Glendale Square, and at Murdock's Hall in East Everett. The Hobbs campaign was held in Glendale Hall. John J. Mullen took his campaign to the cold street corners, lit fires for warmth and had cornet solos. He interrupted a Democratic rally at the Lebow Building by walking in and telling those assembled the building was unsafe.

The campaign came to a grinding halt with the election of Mullen. Just before midnight on December 12, crowds of citizens went to Mullen's home at 100 Hancock Street, carrying brooms (signifying an attack Mullen made against a broom factory in Everett as being "unfit"), and escorted him to City Hall, carrying him up the stairs and hoisting him onto the clerk's desk in the council chambers. Among other things, he said: "...I accepted no campaign contributions, except the use of an auto...I will give a square deal...I will put Everett on the map."

Controversy did not cease with the election, but commenced again when a site for the inauguration was to be selected. The city government voted to hold it in its usual place at the high school auditorium on the second floor, where the audience would be limited to friends and relatives. Mayor-elect Mullen, expecting upwards of 2,000 persons, wanted it in the Armory,

and applied for that location. Captain Lewis P. Sawin of Company B of the National Guard rejected his application on the grounds the Guard had a military ball scheduled for that evening. Mullen went to his superior, Adjutant General Persons, stating the local guard had hurriedly "dreamed up a jig dance" to prevent him from using the Armory. Several times permission was given and then withdrawn, but finally Mullen won out. However, the Board of Aldermen were sworn in at the high school.

On January 1, 1917 the inauguration was held in the Armory, which was filled to capacity, with crowds lining the sidewalks outside. It was the first time the public had been invited, and it was on the basis of first come, first served. The Mayor appeared in immaculate evening dress, his shock of black hair making a pleasing contrast with his white shirt. Hardings's Orchestra and the Schubert Quartet entertained, and the exercises began with Father Mohan of the Immaculate Conception Church asking God's blessing on the city and its newly elected officers. The daughter of William J. Quigley presented flowers. Then came City Messenger Pettengill, in frock coat and silk hat and bearing the white and gold staff of office, escorting some of the city fathers, already sworn in at the high school auditorium. Judge (Colonel) W. Stover, Associate Justice of the Charlestown District Court and an Everett native, swore in the Mayor and one alderman (who had already been sworn in at the high school). Most of the City Council were also sworn in at the Armory. The outgoing Mayor, James Chambers, had not been invited. In his inaugural address, Mullen promised a complete housecleaning of the Assessing Department, as well as efforts to secure a new city hall with all departments under one roof, and the installation of a time-clock procedure for all workers. He announced his intention to erect signs on all new streets giving the engineer's estimate of

stone, cement, sand, etc. for the information of citizens. He announced in favor of pensions and the employment of young men with long-life expectancy. He said he would not permit bigotry at City Hall, stating that "The misguided descendant of foreign born citizens who think this country is only for such as he, will find his error if I hear of it..." Thus John J. Mullen became Mayor of Everett.

After his inauguration his first target was the Fire Commission. He removed the chairman and one other member, leaving only one commissioner. He ordered Fire Chief Swan to sleep at the station nights and not at home, and stipulated Swan was to have one day off in five -- the same as other firefighters. On January 12 he removed four members of the Department of Public Works. On January 19 he called the Tuberculosis Hospital on Fuller Street "The Slaughter House" and "The Morgue." Through his efforts, it was eventually closed. He filed legislation to retire Police Captain John H. Brown, Chairman Columbus Corey of the Assessors, and City Treasurer Nathan Nichols, with pensions. He may have been one of the original founders of the pension system in Everett. He then declared himself a member of the Board of Assessors and demanded their books. stating that of all the cities in New England with a population of 38,000 or more, Everett had the highest tax rate. He blamed the Assessors for an unfair assessing system. Chairman Corey refused to pass over the books, and Mullen went to the State for clarification, which was given in a ruling that he was not a member of the Board of Assessors. His next target was the corporation-taxing system, which he claimed was inadequate. He petitioned Washington for a Post Office and filed bills with the General Court for public improvements here which would cost \$190,000:

\$100,000 for a new city hall

\$ 50,000 for a city hospital

\$ 20,000 for motorization of the fire department  
\$ 20,000 for convenience stations

All this in the month of January.

In February the Mayor removed two members of the Board of Health and appealed to the State for clarification of the powers of a mayor. It was ruled that since no Board of Health was in existence, the Mayor assumed the power of the Board until a new one was appointed. The Board of Aldermen resented the acts of the Mayor, and the sides were drawn. The Aldermen refused to confirm the mayor's appointments, including such reputable doctors as McQuaid and Morris, to the Board of Health. The names were submitted and rejected again. The Mayor stated the rejections involved a question of religion and bigotry. Large audiences attended these meetings, and sizeable numbers of patrolmen. This was only the beginning, as many of the Mayor's appointments continued to be rejected. Eventually, such persons as Dr. McQuaid and Dr. Morris were confirmed, but not for weeks.

Mullen next initiated a long-range plan to have the city lighted by its twenty-fifth anniversary with a "Great White Way" from Broadway to the Boulevard and to Glendale Square. However, he stated he would not approve this unless the other streets were also properly lighted. The Great White Way did become a fact in Everett, but not under Mullen. It was, however, his idea.

His most serious dispute was with Alderman Winfield S. Hamlin, who represented Ward 6. Hamlin accused Mullen of giving away city property. He also called him a liar and charged that Mullen made appointments "from one side." An apology was asked of Hamlin but was not forthcoming. The trouble escalated when Hamlin charged members of the Police Department with threatening city fathers if pay raises were

not allowed. At a crowded public hearing, the Mayor defended the police and called for Hamlin's suspension. The members of the Board of Aldermen became very angry, and when Mullen called for a special meeting to consider the Fire Department, they did not appear. They resented Mullen appearing when he chose at their meetings. He had great difficulty securing a quorum, and on the rare occasions when he was able to do, he would lock the door to the chamber to secure them until votes could be taken.

The Mayor was desperate. In what was a forerunner of the present-day fireside chat, he called an open meeting of the citizenry in front of the library in Everett Square one Saturday evening. Three hundred persons appeared. He stated that the Aldermen were trying to thwart him at every turn. His particular complaint involved the refusal of the Aldermen to go along with his plan to allow city vehicles to plow up the backyards of the citizens to enable them to plant vegetables to compensate for the shortage of food caused by the war overseas. He said he had had to disarm four aldermen because he was afraid they would shoot themselves. He aired all his grievances, cited his goals, and complained he could get none of his ideas through the city government.

In spite of this talk with the people, on May 14, 1917 the quarrel between the Mayor and Alderman Hamlin took a more violent turn. At a meeting they exchanged verbal insults, Mullen stating that certain aldermen were unfit to associate with decent people and should resign. Hamlin took this personally and called on Mullin to leave or be put out. Mullen did not move, and suddenly Hamlin hit him on the jaw, knocking him down. Nearby stood Patrolmen John O'Neil and Jeremiah Sullivan and Inspector MacDuff, who stepped in, but not before Mullen had been shoved against the wall, receiving a bump on his head. Chief

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Hill was called and ordered to arrest Hamlin, which he refused to do on the grounds that the Mayor had to sign a warrant in court, whereupon Mullen asked Chief Hill to resign. He would not, and was suspended on the spot. Alderman Furness had words with Mullen and was overheard saying something about Danvers, which was taken by Mullen to refer to the hospital for the insane there. Mullen also demanded the arrest of Furness, but again Chief Hill refused. In the melee Councilman Cahill had a large part of his trousers cut away. The Mayor appointed William F. Monahan acting chief, pending a hearing for Hill. Monahan was a lieutenant in the morning, a captain in the evening, and acting chief shortly after midnight. The Mayor threatened to abolish the chief of police and save the city \$1,700 per year.

The case was heard in Malden Court on May 25, with Judge Bruce presiding. Maurice R. Flynn represented the city, and Charles C. Long and Elmer E. Spear represented the defendant, Hamlin. Judge Bruce found an unjustified assault had been committed and fined Hamlin twenty dollars. He appealed and was recognized in personal bond of \$100. In retaliation, Mullen tried to have Hamlin removed from the state National Guard.

In June the Mayor was involved in a different kind of dispute with the M. D. C. Park Commission regarding the right-of-way of Everett's citizens over the Boulevard. The M. D. C. had agreed with the previous Mayor to station a patrolman on Main Street, and Everett had agreed to station one on Broadway. Mullen stated he did not care what the previous Mayor promised, he wanted the M. D. C. to furnish an additional man on Broadway and the Boulevard. After he had allowed the M. D. C. time to comply with this request, one Saturday at noon he appeared with men carrying wooden horses and "street closed" signs and blocked off the Boulevard from traffic. By three o'clock the steady line of traffic

through the detour became so heavy the Mayor ordered a ten-mile-per hour speed limit and the arrest of all speeders. The Chairman of the M. D. C. thought the Mayor might have raised "some new issue" but had chosen his own way to find out. Undoubtedly, this action of the Mayor figured in later action by the General Court certifying the right-of-way of pedestrians.

In August the Mayor was involved in a dispute with Judge Riley of the Malden District Court over the Mayor's insistence that his patrolmen prosecute their own cases. The judge refused to hear any case in which a patrolman was the prosecutor, stating he preferred "grade" officers. The Mayor wanted to pattern our police department after Boston, and the Judge felt the patrolmen were unequal to the task and their superiors better qualified. The Mayor let it rest there.

On August 3 he had the voting booth on Vine Street removed to Sandy Beach to be used as a bath-house, and he re-named the beach "Mullen's Beach." He never had much money allotted to his department in the budget, and on one occasion when he was away from the city and Acting Mayor Hansen was taking his place, Hansen sent Mullen a letter that pleaded, "For God's Sake come home." He mailed this without a stamp as there were no stamps in the mayor's office and only twelve cents to the credit of the mayor's department in the city treasury. Hansen complained that in one week he spent twenty-four dollars of his own money for mayoral expenses.

By the fall of 1917 the election was approaching, and on November 2 the Mayor refused to permit open rallies by the Everett Board of Trade. By November 9 William E. Weeks, George W. Faulkner and Mullen had announced their candidacy. Mullen refused to permit any street corner rallies, so they were held in private ways. When the primary returns were in,

Weeks had won with 1,780 votes to 1,619 for Mullen and 551 for Faulkner. Rallies were then held almost nightly, but on a cold December night Mullen found he had lost the election to William E. Weeks - 2,578 votes to 2,348, a difference of 230 votes, with 5,000 ballots counted. The Mayor secured a patrolman to watch the ballots, but in a recount he gained only five votes.

With the defeat of Mullen, a year of great dis-sension in Everett came to an end. He was defeated not only in the election, but in his attempt to get his program through the city government. He ran again for public office here, but was defeated. His frustration was complete when some of his appointees were suspended, and officials he had suspended were reinstated. He eventually removed from Everett to Saugus, where he lived the remainder of his life, residing at 169 Main Street. He served on the Board of Assessors in Saugus from 1932 to 1941, and was Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for one year, 1936. He died in Saugus in 1952, and his wife, Honora who was born in Ireland, died later the same year.

There is no doubt that John J. Mullen was a very controversial mayor. Because of his inability to get along with the Board of Aldermen, or the Board's inability to get along with him, his program could not be put into effect. However, many of the ideas which he enunciated have become part of our way of life. He had other ideas which at the time seemed wild and whose time had not yet come, but such ideas as steam-heated sidewalks, which he espoused, are actually in existence today in Boston and Revere. There is no question that John J. Mullen has become a legendary figure in our city.

Credit: Everett Republican Newspaper microfilm  
at Parlin Memorial Library

## THE EVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### THE SOUTH PARISH PARSONAGE

by

Julia Rich Hogan

Let us take a trip, in fancy, back fifty years, to 1926. Picture a graceful old house of 2-1/2 stories, made of clapboards and shuttered, standing at 290 Main Street, surrounded by a white picket fence. It stood alone on some eight-plus acres of land which stretched across the present Main, Prescott, Everett and Tremont Streets, and it was one of the largest buildings standing for many years on the Mystic Side.

Let us go further back to 1747 when this old house was built. On April 2, 1747 the South Parish voted to install the Rev. Aaron Cleveland as its pastor. Shortly after his installation the Parish also voted to build a parsonage and acquire land on which to build it. These things were done, and the Rev. Cleveland reigned over the parish until November, 1750. It was not until February 20, 1752 that the vacant position was filled, and on that date the Rev. Eliakim Willis, a Harvard graduate of the Class of 1735, accepted the call. To accommodate him, the parsonage was enlarged and under the terms of a contract he was to have the use of the parsonage and a woodlot of eighteen cords.

Rev. Willis served the South Parish long and well. He was an exhorter, a preacher of fire and brimstone. However, reverse financial conditions beset the parish and his salary could not be paid. Rather than do without his services, the parish agreed that in return for his promise to remain as pastor for three years, without compensation except for weekly

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collections, the land on which the parsonage stood would be conveyed to him, the prior contract to be null and void. This he agreed to do and took over ownership of the parsonage and land. He died on March 14, 1801, age 88, and his estate, including the parsonage, went to his descendants and to the wife of Colonel John Popkins.

Colonel and Mrs. Popkins lived at the parsonage for some years. He died in 1827 and descendants occupied it until 1870, when the land was cut up and sold for building lots, only the house lot remaining. It passed through various hands until 1926 when it was razed for the erection of a building housing eight stores and a 100-car garage. Today Kappy's Liquor Store stands on this site at the corner of Main and Prescott Streets.

If, as a Society, we could go back to 1926, in reality and not in fancy, perhaps we could have saved this Parsonage and preserved it for posterity. We cannot, of course, but perhaps we can exert some influence to save what other old landmarks are left in Everett so that our descendants will find it unnecessary to imagine what landmarks looked like, but will be able to see them in person.

Credit - Everett Gazette March 12, 1926  
(Microfilm at Parlin Library)

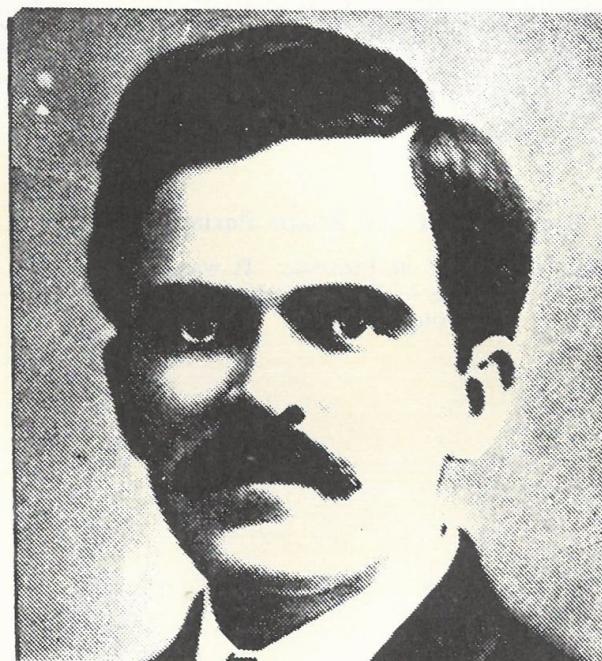
THE EVERETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FUTURE LITERARY PROJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

In our search to establish the history of the various ethnic cultures that have made up Everett's population over the years, a series of articles is planned. The first will be included in the November Bulletin. It is entitled "The Swedish People of Everett" and has been collected and written by Mrs. Karl Anderson.

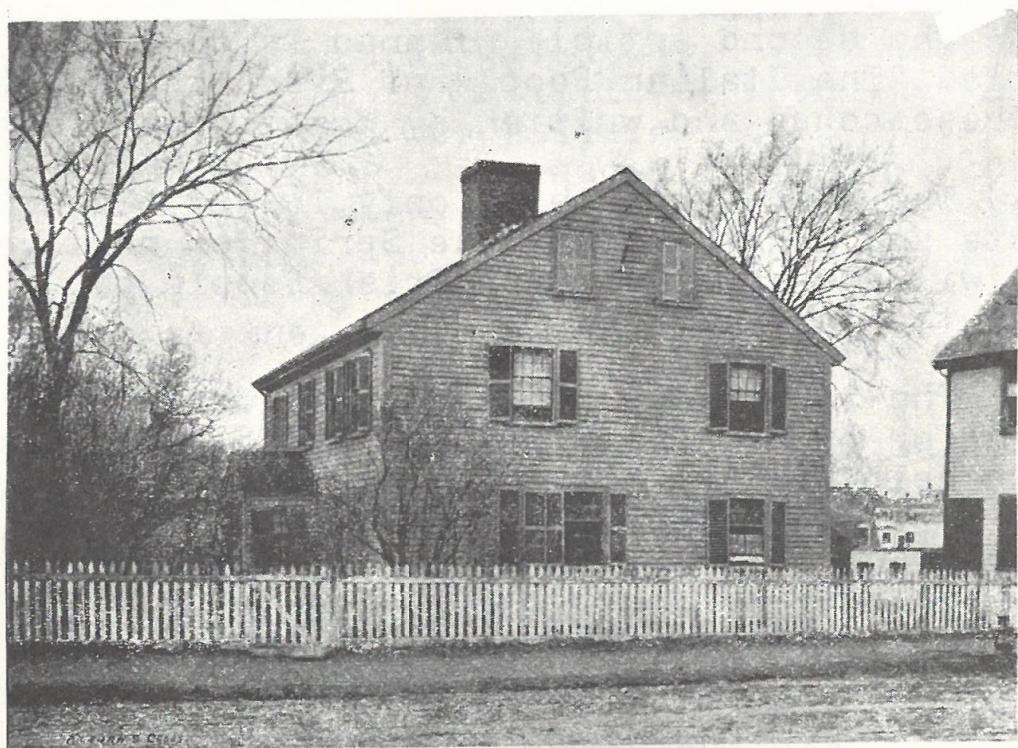
The second article planned is to be entitled "The Italian People of Everett" and will be researched and written by Mrs. Louis Higgins.

The third article is only in the planning state and scheduled for the Spring of next year, and will be entitled "The Irish People of Everett."

The Society is seeking data from all persons for both the Italian and Irish histories. Your help will be appreciated.



JOHN J. MULLEN  
1917



**The Parsonage of the South Parish, in Malden.**

Situated on Main Street just South of Prescott. It was built in 1747 or earlier, and was for many years the residence of Rev. Eliakim Willis, the last minister of the South Parish, and later by Col. John Popkins.